

DPH Announces Potential Young Child Death From Flu

Dover – Even as flu season in Delaware is winding down, the Division of Public Health (DPH) is announcing a potential flu-related death to a child under the age of 2. If confirmed, that would bring the total number of flu-related fatalities for the 2016-2017 flu season to 15. The child passed away near the end of April. To protect the privacy of the child and the family no further information about the child will be released.

“The death of a child is tragic under any circumstances, and our hearts and prayers go out to the child’s family during this very difficult time,” said Dr. Kara Odom Walker, Secretary for the Department of Health and Social Services. “We hope that by sharing this information, we can reach other parents with a reminder that influenza is still circulating in the community and young children, particularly those under age two, are especially at risk if they contract the virus.”

“The influenza virus can continue to circulate even during the summer months,” said DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay. “It is important that everyone, and especially those in high-risk groups like young children, continue to take precautions. If you’re experiencing flu-like symptoms, you should immediately consult your doctor, especially if you have underlying health conditions, are under age 5, over age 65 or pregnant.”

As of the week ending April 29, there were 26 laboratory-confirmed cases of influenza reported among Delaware residents with a total of 4,525 cases for the season. Of the 4,525 cases, 810 were ages 4 and under. Thirty-seven children ages 4 or under have also been hospitalized due to the flu.

Of the laboratory-confirmed flu cases this season, 2,159 (47.7

percent) involved infected individuals are from New Castle County, 1,374 (30.4 percent) are from Kent County, and 992 (21.9 percent) are from Sussex County. These numbers reflect lab-confirmed cases and the actual number of illnesses is likely much higher.

Precautions against the flu continue to be vital, including:

- Vaccination.
- Washing hands frequently with soap or using alcohol-based hand sanitizers, especially after you cough, sneeze, or touch your face.
- Covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue and disposing of the tissue immediately. If a tissue is not available, cough or sneeze into your inner elbow. Droplets from a sneeze can travel up to six feet.
- Staying home when sick and not returning to work or school until you are fever-free for 24 hours.
- Ensuring all your loved ones are vaccinated against the flu.
- Taking anti-virals as prescribed by your doctor.

If you are receiving treatment in a long-term care facility or in-home care, ask if the staff is vaccinated against the flu and if not, be certain all non-vaccinated staff members wear a mask at all times. Visits at home or in a facility should be limited if the visitor is under age 16, has the flu, or is at risk of exposure to the flu. The illness can be transmitted prior to someone showing symptoms. If you are living with a senior and a family member contracts the flu, keep the two separate as much as possible and ensure everyone in the home follows sanitary precautions.

DPH recommends that people with flu-like illnesses call – not visit – their medical providers, who may be able to prescribe anti-viral medications by phone.

For more information on influenza prevention, diagnosis and

treatment, visit flu.delaware.gov or call DPH at 800-282-8672.

A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.

Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.